

# HISTORY OF TAMA HILLS

Tama Hills' History dates back to 1938 before World War II (WWII). At that time the Japanese Imperial Army established a munitions processing and storage plant under direction of Arsenal Headquarters in Itabashi located in central Tokyo. Historical records reveal that the plant was constructed exclusively for the production of explosive chemicals. It became an independent facility in 1940 with 2,085 people, three facilities, housing, dormitories and warehouses by the end of WWII.

The Tama arsenal was built according to German specifications. It resembled facilities in Bavaria, a province in Southern Germany. Processed bombs were stored in numerous concrete "Bunkers" throughout Tama Dept, many of which remain today. The Japanese Army took full advantage of the natural concealment to hide the facilities. It was so effective in fact, that the depot was undetected during the entire WWII.

Shortly after occupation, the U.S. Army took possession of Tama as compensation property. They discovered that large areas of the site had been rendered useless. Before surrendering in an apparent act of sabotage, Japanese soldiers had saturated most of the grounds with picric acid, a highly poisonous chemical. The Army brought in decontamination and demolition teams who cleared the site and checked for live ammunition. The recorded U.S. Military possession date was 1 November 1945. The Army relinquished control of Tama on 28 October 1947 to the newly established U.S. Air Force. Within two months, the Air Force began to stock and store bombs and other ammunition at Tama.

U.S. Forces occupied the area provisionally until the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty of 29 April 1952. Since then, the area has been controlled by U.S. Forces Japan under the status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

In the early 1950's, primary operations at the depot included receipt, storage, issue, inspection, maintenance, reconditioning, modification and disposal of ammunition components and items.

In support of the Korean Conflict, logistics planning



called for a total of three ammunition depots throughout Japan. Two additional sites were acquired from the Government of Japan in 1952; one was Yamada near Kyushu and the other Kozoji near Nagoya. By early 1952, approximately 20,000 tons of aerial bombs were stored at Tama. So massive were the number of bombs that they had to be stored in every available building, cavern, bunker and open areas of the Tama compound.

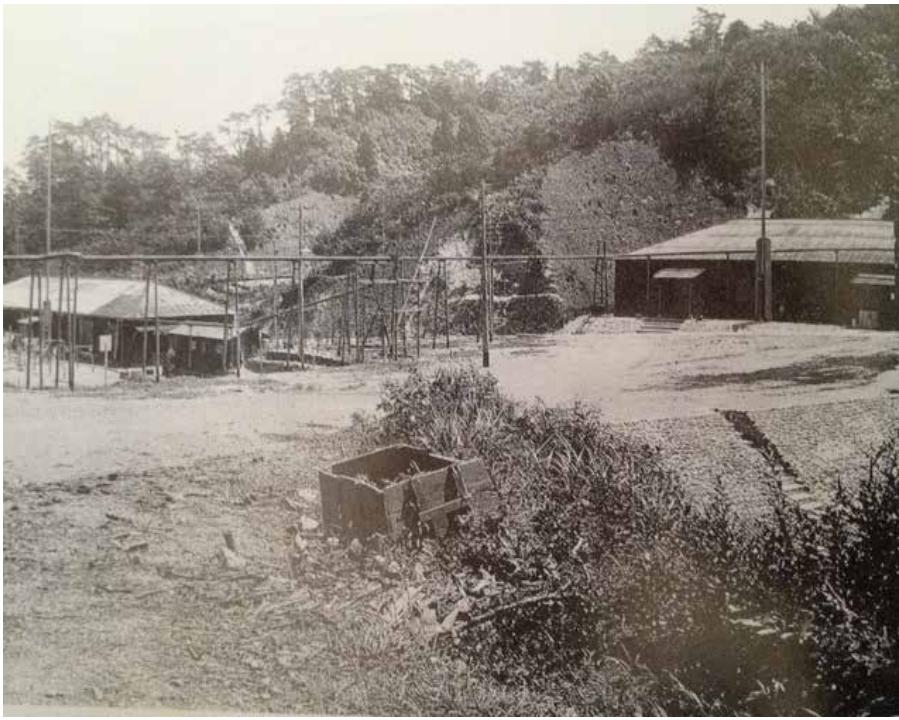
The bombs were transported by truck and railed to Yokota Air Base. They were loaded on to various fighters, bombers or cargo aircraft destined for Korea. Logistically, Tama proved to be as valuable to U.S. Forces during the Korean Conflict as it had for the Japanese army in World War II.

Both Yamada and Kozoji were deactivated at the end of the conflict. Tama, on the other hand continued operations several months after the conflict's end.

In late 1954 and early 1955, an improved Pacific Logistics Plan Order deactivated all Air Force munitions storage sites in Japan. With no military operational value, Tama was turned over to the 6100th Chaplains' office at Tachikawa Air Base for use as a religious retreat center. In addition a Boy Scout camp based at Nikko, north of Tokyo, was permanently assigned to the 6100th Support Wing at Tachikawa Air Base on 1 July 1964. Tama has hosted many Boy Scout campers since then.

In 1967, Air Force received total accountability for Tama from the U.S. Army in Japan. In September of that year, the site was renamed Tama Service Annex. It consisted of Tama Recreation Center and a partially completed 18-hole golf course and facilities constructed by the Government of Japan. The new golf course and facilities were part of an agreement between





the U.S. Military and Japanese Government in exchange for the nine-hole Showa Golf Course, located at Showa Air Base near Yokota Air Base, Japan. The Tama golf course and facilities were completed in September 1969 and accepted from the Japanese Government 24 December 1969. The golf course comprises approximately one-half of Tama's 489 acres.

By early 1970, U.S. and Japanese authorities were consolidating U.S. Military facilities in the Kanto Plain. Part of the Kanto Plain Consolidation Plan called for the closing of Tachikawa Air Base and transferring most of its operational responsibilities to Yokota Air Base. Because Tama was controlled by the 6100th Support Wing in Tachikawa, it was included in the transfer.

In 1971 when the 475th Air Base Wing at Yokota inherited Tama, many original facilities at the site were either abandoned or had fallen prey to forces of nature. Some were able to be renovated by Air Force Civil Engineers and volunteer organizations from the Yokota community. One major facility that still remains today is the Red Horse Lodge.

Air Force officials determined that, through development and existing natural resources, Tama has great potential as an off-base recreation complex. However, little was done to develop this potential.

Throughout the 1970's Tama was again operated as a religious retreat center, with the added attraction of an 18-hole golf course. It was also made available to military people who were in-transit for temporary duty or leave. Most facilities, however, were in poor condition and would

have remained so without interest showing by Lieutenant General James D. Hughes, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Force. After a visit to Tama in January 1980, General Hughes felt that Tama could be the "Camp John Hay\*\*" of the Northern Pacific.

In 1980, a conceptual plan was drawn up to upgrade Tama. The following two years, only minor housekeeping types of construction were carried out at Tama. Eventually, interest came to a gradual halt and so did what little construction that was going on.

Interest in the Tama project was revived shortly after Colonel Barry J. Howard assumed command of the 475th Air Base Wing in June 1982. Through his leadership, volunteers donated time and effort to upgrade facilities in one area frequented by Boy Scouts and other youth groups. Other volunteers undertook the clearing of nature trails and brush from around buildings. In October 1982, a crew of seven Airmen with Civil Engineering backgrounds volunteered to live at Tama six days a week to do major renovations. They concentrated on such areas as flooring, structural repair, electrical problems and plumbing essentials.

And the end of the twentieth century, a highway expansion traded land for new lodge, outdoor recreation and support facilities.

Today, Tama consists of a lodging facility with 15 private rooms in the main lodge and 10 cabins scattered amongst the hills, Tama also boasts a full-service dining room, bar, lounge, laundry room, conference room and a mini-store with sundries and popular logo items

Outdoor recreation facilities include three picnic areas, 22 campsites, hiking trails, an 18-hole miniature golf course, horseback riding stables, tennis court, softball field, archery range, basketball court, playgrounds and paintball field. Equipment Rentals include sporting equipment, camping supplies, mountain bikes and more.

Tama Hills Recreation Area is maintained and operated by the 374th Force Support Squadron at Yokota Air Base.

*\*\*"Camp John Hay" located in Baguio City, Philippines was the premier Armed Forces Recreation Center in the Pacific. It was closed after the eruption of Mt Pinatubo in June 1991.*